Meadows Family In TV Documentary

A Rolling Meadows family will be the subject of a Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) documentary tomorrow night on Channel 11 television entitled, "The Man in the Middle."

The half-hour program begins at 9 p.m. and features the Richard Johnsons, 2402 Willow St., as a typical middle-class suburban family and their views toward political candidates in this year's elections. The program is the second in a series of PBS broadcasts of "A Public Affair — Election 72."

Robert Lissit, a producer of the series, said from Washington yesterday that tomorrow night's program "shows a family making too much money to get federal and state benefits but not enough to handle expenses of everyday living." Lissit said the Johnsons have the same problems as most middle-class suburbanites and were selected as being "typical."

Before filming the documentary, the PBS searched for a community whose residents have incomes between $9,000 and $15,000, and selected Rolling Meadows. About 25 Rolling Meadows families were interviewed before the Johnsons were chosen as the typical Rolling Meadows family.

THE PROGRAM opens with the family viewing Sen. Edmund Muskie as he declares his candidacy for the presidency on an evening television program and then shows a normal day in the life of the Johnsons. Lissit said the film depicts the family going through their "everyday routine."

Johnson is interviewed as he commutes to work in Evanston. Films also were taken of two of the Johnsons' four children at school. Another segment is of the family during choir practice at Trinity Lutheran Church in Rolling Meadows.

Lissit said the interviews point out that the middle-class American "is not about to march on Washington or refuse to pay taxes . . . but is concerned about the country."

Middle-class families including the Johnsons, Lissit said, find they have kids who soon will go to college "but they don't know where they will get the money to send them. They are in the middle."

The television crew and PBS correspondent Robert MacNeil spent a week with the Johnson family. MacNeil is the principal correspondent for the series, along with Sander Vanocur.

"A PUBLIC AFFAIR — Election 72" is a weekly series of broadcasts which will continue until the November elections. The programs attempt to show an election campaign from the point of view of those who vote rather than from the standpoint of the politician.

Last week was the first program in the series and filmed residents of a small Iowa town during their caucus to select representatives to the national Democratic convention. More than 200 PBS-affiliated stations throughout the United States have been offered the series of programs.

The series is financed by a special grant provided specifically for the purpose of encouraging public news and documentary programming.